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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the results of a questionnaire distributed to all Philadelphia secondary school principals (with returns from 68 percent), eliciting their reactions to various aspects of the transfer to them of line authority for building engineers. Responses indicate that the process of assuming supervisory responsibility was not yet complete, though more complete in senior high schools than in junior high or middle schools. Likewise, indicators of the beneficial effects of this program on building maintenance and cleanliness were reported more often at the senior high than at the junior high or middle school levels. Benefits of the change reported by the principals included greater ease in ordering custodial supplies, greater authority over the custodial function, and a closer working relationship with the building engineer. The major disadvantage of the program was seen to be the amount of administrative time it requires. Suggestions were offered for followup conferences and additional staff development sessions. Two appendixes provide a tally of responses to each question on the questionnaire and a copy of the maintenance and operations reporting survey. (TE)

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SURVEY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: BUILDING ENGINEER REPORTING LINE CHANGE

Report No. 8425
April, 1984

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation
THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

EA 017 785

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Abstract

Questionnaires were distributed to principals of all secondary schools eliciting their reactions to various aspects of the transfer to them of line authority for Building Engineers. Returns were received from 68% of the principals.

Responses indicated that the process of assumption of supervisory responsibility was not yet complete, though more complete in senior high schools than in junior high or middle schools. Likewise indicators of program effects on building maintenance and cleanliness, while limited, were reported more often at the senior high than junior high or middle school levels.

Principals reported as benefits of the change being able to order custodial supplies more easily, having greater authority over the custodial function, and fostering a closer working relationship with the Building Engineer. The amount of administrative time required by this new responsibility was seen as a disadvantage.

Suggestions for follow-up conferences and additional staff development sessions were offered.

Introduction

During the 1982-83 school year the decision was made to change the reporting line of Building Engineers from direct responsibility to the District Engineer to direct responsibility to the Building Principal. In preparation for this change a pilot project was conducted involving 21 schools (Ayrer, 1983), which showed the change to be workable. The change was, in fact, implemented in all secondary schools during the 1983-84 school year.

The purpose of this study is to determine the progress, problems, and successes of this program during its first year of operation, as perceived by the Building Principals. Further studies, now in progress, will present data from Building Engineers and from administrative subdistrict personnel.

The instrument used was a three page document containing ten items and combining "check-off" and open ended questions. A copy of this instrument will be found in Appendix B.

Sample

Instruments were sent to the principals of all secondary schools having School District custodial personnel. Responses were received from 7 out of 13 middle school principals (54%), 17 out of 23 junior high principals (74%), and 22 out of 32 Senior High/AVTS/Skills Center principals (69%) for an overall response rate of 68%.

Results

Question 1: Have you been able to involve the custodian as a part of your management team?

Table 1

Senior		Junior		Middle	
Yes	18	Yes	14	Yes	3
No	4	No	2	No	4
NR	0	NR	1	NR	0

Except for the middle schools, the majority of principals reported having been able to involve the custodian as part of the management team. Those responding "yes" were asked to explain how. Their responses are summarized in Table A-1 in Appendix A. In senior high schools this was accomplished mostly by making the Building Engineer part of the administrative cabinet, while in junior high schools it was through meetings between the building engineer and the principal or vice principal.

Principals responding in the negative were asked to explain why. Their responses are summarized in Table A-1 in Appendix A. The reasons most often given were that the Building Engineer was incapable or that the principal didn't have time.

Question 2: The official preventive maintenance schedule includes activities which must be accomplished daily, week, etc. Have you been able to monitor the accomplishment of these tasks?

Table 2

Senior		Junior		Middle	
Yes	9	Yes	4	Yes	1
Usually	6	Usually	3	Usually	0
Occasionally	5	Occasionally	1	Occasionally	5
No	2	No	5	No	1
NR	0	NR	0	NR	0

Approximately two thirds of the senior high principals responded in the affirmative, while a bare majority of the junior high principals and one middle school principal responded affirmatively.

Principals responding "yes" or "usually" were asked to explain how they had accomplished this, while those responding "no" were asked to indicate what had prevented them from doing so. No specific responses were requested from those responding "occasionally," but some were offered. Responses are summarized in Table A-2 in Appendix A.

Those responding affirmatively (yes/usually) reported monitoring maintenance schedules through meetings held with the Building Engineer and/or inspection tours of the building. Four senior high schools reported assigning a vice principal to the responsibility.

The few responses received from those responding "occasionally" indicated that the principal had no time to monitor preventive maintenance. The same response was received from those stating "no."

Question 3: How does the state of repair of your building compare with the way it was prior to this program?

Table 3

Response	Senior	Junior	Middle
Better	13	5	2
About the Same	8	12	3
Worse	1	0	2

The impact of the program was seen as more positive at the senior high level than at either the junior high or middle schools. Since there was no baseline information available before the initiation of this program, there is no way of knowing whether "about the same" means "just as good" or "just as bad," etc. Responses to this item might best be considered as one significant indicator of principals' satisfaction with the program.

Question 4: How does the cleanliness of your building compare with the way it was prior to this program?

Table 4

Response	Senior	Junior	Middle
Better	11	3	2
About the same	11	14	5
Worse	0	0	0

The majority of junior high and middle school principals and half of the senior high principals observed no change in building cleanliness. Half of the senior high principals reported improved cleanliness. Here, too, responses should be regarded as one significant indicator of principal satisfaction with the program.

Question 5: How does the delivery of custodial supplies to your building compare with the way it was before this program?

Table 5

Response	Senior	Junior	Middle
More timely	11	7	2
About the same	10	6	4
Less timely	1	3	1
NR	0	1	0

Half of the senior high school principals reported more timely delivery of supplies. While less than half (approximately 40%) of the junior high principals reported more timely delivery of supplies, this does represent a more positive response on their part than on previous items, possibly indicating that this aspect of the program is working better for them. Middle school principals saw little change.

Question 6: How does the sufficiency of custodial supplies compare with the way it was before this program?

Table 6

Response	Senior	Junior	Middle
More adequate	12	5	3
About the same	8	9	4
Less adequate	2	3	0

Over half of the senior high principals reported an increased adequacy of supplies, while junior high and middle school principals reported little difference.

Question 7: What, if your opinion, is the greatest strength or benefit of this program?

Responses of principals to this question are summarized in Table A-3 in Appendix A.

The three main strengths of this program identified by principals were:

a. greater freedom to order supplies

b. more supervisory control by principal

c. closer/better working relationship between principal and building engineer

Though all three were cited at each school level, the most frequently mentioned by senior high principals was freedom to order supplies, while junior high principals most frequently mentioned having a better working relationship with the Building Engineer. Middle school principals referred to more supervisory control by the principal.

Question 8: What, if your opinion, is the greatest weakness of this program?

Responses of principals to this question are summarized in Table A-4 in Appendix A.

Though no item was cited by a majority of the principals at any school level, the four items mentioned most frequently were:

a. requires too much administrative time

b. repair problems still exist

c. deficiencies of custodial personnel

d. lack of clear lines of responsibility

Question 9: What, if any, additional staff development for principals do you believe is necessary for the successful continuation of this program?

Responses to this question are summarized in Table A-5 in Appendix A. Overall, approximately 40% of the principals thought that no additional staff development was needed, or at least had no topics to propose. Among the remaining principals, the most frequently mentioned topic was "roles, responsibilities and relationships." Of the remaining scattered topics, most dealt with various aspects of administrative details or paperwork related to the custodial operation.

Question 10: If there are any additional comments which you would care to share regarding this program, please use this space.

Responses to this question are summarized in Table A-6 in Appendix A. Less than half of the principals elected to make additional comments. Reactions were too scattered to permit meaningful summarization. Many of the responses, however, are reiterations of comments offered under questions seven and eight, above.

Conclusions

Though line responsibility for custodial personnel has been transferred to the building principal officially, responses indicate that the process of assumption of supervisory responsibility is not yet complete. There appears to be some confusion about roles and responsibilities. Some principals appear to be uncertain as to what they can or what they are "supposed to" expect from the custodial staff. This is complicated by the various administrative procedures related to the custodial function that are unfamiliar to them. Then, there is the perception by a number of principals that these additional responsibilities are being added to an already full schedule.

Generally, implementation has been more complete at the senior high level than at either the junior high or middle school level, and a greater proportion of the principals at that level reported positive effects of the program. Some senior high

principals reported turning the responsibility for monitoring the custodial function over to a vice principal. Junior high and middle school principals reported little change.

As indicated above in discussing responses to individual questions, one must be careful not to overinterpret these reactions, since there is no measure of the status of each school on relevant variables (i.e., state of building repair, building cleanliness, etc.) before the initiation of the program.

Principals saw as benefits of this program being given greater freedom to order needed custodial supplies, having greater supervisory control over custodial staff, and fostering closer working relationships with custodial personnel. At the same time they felt that demands being made on their time were too great, and they were still uncertain about lines of responsibility.

Though there was no agreement as to what, if any, additional staff development was desired, principals' responses appear to indicate a need for a greater familiarity with the functioning of the custodial department. This should cover both their areas of responsibility and how to determine the effectiveness of their activities. At the same time, there appears to be a need for greater familiarity with related regulations and paperwork.

It might also be well to schedule several follow-up sessions with principals to permit the sharing of problems and solutions. This could provide the opportunity for them to gain both information and reassurance, and they appear to need both.

Finally, a clear official statement of authority and responsibilities of all parties involved regarding the custodial function would help allay some of the apprehensions expressed by principals.

APPENDIX A

NOTE: The numbers in parentheses in all tables are the number of respondents who offered a particular comment. All tables are arranged in three parallel columns according to level of school.

In Tables A-1 through A-5, similar responses offered by principals at each school level are placed on the same line, making it possible to read across the page and determine how many senior high, junior high, and middle school principals submitted a particular response.

No attempt was made to do this in Table A-6, as responses were too diverse.

Table A-1

Question 1: Have you been able to involve the custodian as a part of your management team?

YES

Senior High (N=18)	Junior High (N=14)	Middle School (N=3)
. Is part of adm. cabinet (9)	. Attends cabinet meetings (1)	. Part of adm. cabinet (1)
. Is part of School Committee (2)		
. Meets with prin. or v.p. (2)	. Meets with prin. or v.p. (9)	. Meets with prin. or v.p. (2)
. Is consulted (2)		. Is consulted (1)
. Sits in on adm. meetings from time to time (1)		
. Can make purchases (1)		
. N.R. (3)		
	. Attends faculty meetings (2)	. Speaks periodically to faculty (1)
	. Prin. checks on bldg. engr., initials sign-in sheets, etc (1)	
	. Prin. coordinates with bldg. engr. (1)	
	. Prin. gives public show of support (2)	
		. Has direct access to admin. (1)

NO

(N=4)	(N=2)	(N=4)
. Bldg. engr. has failed to assume adm. respon. (1)		
. Bldg. engr. can't do job (1)	. Bldg. engr. can't do job (1)	. Bldg. engr. can't do job (2)
. Haven't had time, but will soon (1)		. Do not have time (1)
. N.R. (1)		
	. Need clearer picture of roles of all involved (1)	
		. Bldg. engr. must be removed from 1201 before he can be part of mgt. (1)

Table A-2

Question 2: The official preventive maintenance scheduled includes activities which must be accomplished daily, week, etc. Have you been able to monitor the accomplishment of these tasks?

YES/USUALLY

Senior High (N=15)	Junior High (N=7)	Middle School (N=1)
. Held mtgs. with bldg. engr. (6)	. Held mtgs. with custodian (4)	. Held mtg. with bldg. engr. (1)
. Assigned V.P. to do it (4)		
. Make inspection tours of bldg. (3)	. Make inspection tours of bldg. (6)	. Make inspection tours of bldg. (1)
. N.R. (4)		
	. Review p.m. schedule weekly (1)	

OCCASIONALLY

(N=5)	(N=5)	(N=5)
. No time (1)	. No time (1)	. No time (1)
. N.R. (4)	. N.R. (3)	. N.R. (3)
	. Have to keep after bldg. engr. (1)	
		. Tour bldg. and meet with bldg. engr. (1)

NO

(N=2)	(N=5)	(N=1)
. No time (2)	. No time (1)	. No time (1)
	. Have never seen p.m. schedule (1)	
	. Nothing done until an emergency (1)	
	. N.R. (2)	

Table A-3

Question 7: What, in your opinion, is the greatest strength or benefit of this program?

Senior High (N=22)	Junior High (N=17)	Middle School (N=7)
. Greater freedom to order supplies (8)	. Ability to make pruchases (2)	. Faster Route to get materials (1)
. More supervisory control by principal (4)	. More principal involvement and control (4)	. More supervisory control by principal (4)
. Better communication between principal and cust. staff (5)		
. Closer working relations between principal and bldg. engr. (3)	. Better working relationship (11)	. Closer working relationship (3)
. Improved morale (3)		
. Improved services (1)		
. Increased attendance (1)		
	. None (2)	. None (1)
	. Improved Receipt of supplies (3)	
	. The ability of bldg. engr. (2)	
	. Greater awareness of plant by principal (2)	. Admin. more knowledgeable of plant (1)
	. N.R. (1)	. N. R. (1)

Table A-4

Question 8: What, if your opinion, is the greatest weakness of this program?

Senior High (N=22)	Junior High (N=17)	Middle School (N=7)
. Requires too much admin. time (5)	. Too much admin. time (4)	. Too much admin. time (3)
. Takes too long to get major repairs done (3)		. Many repair problems still exist (3)
. Deficiency of bldg. engr. (2)	. Limitations of bldg. engr. (3)	
. Lack of exp. cust. personnel (2)	. Not enough sub. service (1)	
. Better guidelines re: roles and authority (3)	. Lack of clear lines of responsibility (1)	. Lack of clear lines of responsibility (1)
. The additional paper-work (1)	. Additional paperwork (1)	
. Lack of time for transition (1)	. Not enough staff devel. before transition (1)	. Not enough staff devel. for bldg. engr. (1)
. Lack of communication between principal and control admin. (1)	. Ordering of supplies still through requisition (1)	
. None (1)	. None (1)	
. N.R. (3)	. N.R. (1)	
	. Not enough money in imprest fund (1)	
	. List of approved vendors needed (1)	
	. All control should be transferred to principal (1)	
	. Lack of clear relationship between D.E. and bldg. engr. (1)	
	. School District's bills still not paid promptly (1)	
	. Too early to tell (1)	. Too soon to tell (1)
		. Not being able to send the custodian to purchase materials (1)

Table A-5

Question 9: What, if any, additional staff development for principals do you believe is necessary for the successful continuation of this program?

Senior High (N=22)	Junior High (N=17)	Middle School (N=7)
. The 1201 contract (4)		
. Responsibilities and relationships (3)	. Roles, responsibilities relationships (4)	. Functions of D.E. and M & O and school facilities (1)
. Role of dist. engr. (3)		
. M & O procedures (2)		
. Rating (2)		. 204 Process (1)
. Attendance (2)		. Attendance and payroll (2)
. Budget and accounting (2)		
. Purchasing (1)	. Requisition and purchasing (1)	
. Work Stations (1)		
. Records (1)		
. Inventories (1)		
. Utilization of dis. off. personnel (1)		
. School District policy (1)		
. Plant operations (1)	. Plant operation (1)	
. Joint mtg. or princ. and bldg engrs. (1)	. Conf. to discuss problems and solutions (2)	
	. Time Budgeting for principal (1)	
. None (5)	. None (3)	. None (3)
. N.R. (4)	. N.R. (4)	
	. Time requirements for custodial tasks (1)	

Table A-6

Question 10: If there are any additional comments which you would care to share regarding this program, please use this space.

Senior High (N=22)	Junior High (N=17)	Middle School (N=7)
. N.R. (12)	. N.R. (8)	. N.R. (4)
. Petty cash fund facilitates operation (2)	. The program still needs the involvement of the D.E. (1)	. Schools with large groups or carpeting need more help (1)
. Have better line of communication with bldg. engr. (2)	. Bldg. engr. should keep a running inventory of custodial supplies (1)	. Take M & O away from the principal again; the system needs to be revamped, but this is not the way (1)
. Budget policy needs to be better explained (1)	. Work orders should be acted on more quickly (1)	. Bldg. engr.'s work day should be extended 1 1/2 hrs. so he can supervise cleaning staff (1)
. Need better communication between bldg. engr. and M & O (1)	. No real benefit felt yet (1)	. Attendance and substitutes are a problem (1)
. Need additional help with security (1)	. More staff orientation needed before program initiated (1)	
. Existing vacancies should be filled with permanent appointments (1)	. Mechancis already in bldg. will not touch anything for which they do not have a standing work order (1)	
. Takes too long for larger repair items (1)	. M & O people need to be reassured that their jobs are not in jeapordy (1)	
. Could custodial helpers be trained to do routine window glass replacement and interior painting? (1)	. Should be fewer restrictions on purchase of equip. and tools (1)	
. Bldg. engr. should be consultant to principal in plant operations areas (1)	. Need clarification of role of principal and D.O. in monitoring attendance (1)	
. Cooperation of bldg. engr. has been supurb (1)	. The 1201 bidding progress is counterproducting too much turnover. (1)	

APPENDIX B

M & O REPORTING SYSTEM SURVEY

TO THE PRINCIPAL: Please respond to the following items and return this form in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope. Your observations and professional judgement (and/or that of the appropriate vice principal) will be major components of the evaluation of this program. Thank you for your cooperation.

This school is a (check one): _____ Senior High; AVTS; Skills Center

_____ Junior High _____ Middle School

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1. Have you been able to involve the custodian as a part of your management team?

_____ YES _____ NO

(If YES, explain how; if NO explain why.)

---

2. The official preventive maintenance schedule includes activities which must be accomplished daily, week, etc. Have you been able to monitor the accomplishment of these tasks?

_____ YES _____ USUALLY _____ OCCASIONALLY _____ NO

(If YES or USUALLY, please explain how; if NO, please explain what prevented you from doing so.)

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3. How does the state of repair of your building compare with the way it was prior to this program?

_____ BETTER _____ ABOUT THE SAME _____ WORSE

4. How does the cleanliness of your building compare with the way it was prior to this program?

_____ WORSE _____ ABOUT THE SAME _____ BETTER

---

5. How does the delivery of custodial supplies to your building compare with the way it was before this program?

_____ MORE TIMELY _____ ABOUT THE SAME _____ LESS TIMELY

---

6. How does the sufficiency of custodial supplies compare with the way it was before this program?

_____ LESS ADEQUATE _____ ABOUT THE SAME _____ MORE ADEQUATE

---

7. What, in your opinion, is the greatest strength or benefit of this program?

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8. What, in your opinion, is the greatest weakness of this program?

9. What, if any, additional staff development for principals do you believe is necessary for the successful continuation of this program? (Please be specific.)

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10. If there are any additional comments which you would care to share regarding this program, please use this space.

OPRE 3/84

REFERENCES

Ayrer, James E. "A Report on the Pilot Program Transferring Supervisory Responsibility for Custodial Staff to Building Principals," School District of Philadelphia, 1983.